



## Pollinator Protection Planning Kicks Off in Wisconsin Aug. 12

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MADISON – Work on a pollinator protection plan for Wisconsin will begin with a stakeholder meeting Wednesday, Aug. 12, at the Arlington Agricultural Research Station.

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection is working with researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison to develop the pollinator protection plan. The plan is intended to improve understanding of factors affecting pollinator health, increase communication among stakeholders, and identify voluntary actions Wisconsin residents can take.

"Wisconsin agriculture would be much less prosperous and much less diverse without pollinators," said Secretary Ben Brancel. "Our fruit crops like cranberries, cherries and apples rely on insect pollinators, especially honeybees. Many of the vegetable crops on our organic farms and in the Central Sands need pollinators. Our alfalfa crop depends on bumblebees, and our vine crops like cucumbers, pumpkin and squash rely on squash bees. Pollinators are a matter of millions of dollars and thousands of jobs in Wisconsin."

The meeting, running 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m., will be a forum for discussion among invited stakeholders, including representatives from agricultural organizations and businesses; environmental groups; the University of Wisconsin; and state, federal and tribal governments. Members of the general public will have a brief opportunity for comment at this meeting and two later meetings, but the main public comment period will come in November when a draft of the plan has been written.

In Wisconsin, pollinators include honeybees as well as wild, native species of bees and other insects that carry pollen between plants, fertilizing the plants so they produce fruit, vegetables and seeds. News stories have focused on population declines among managed colonies of honeybees, but some wild pollinators like bumblebees are also declining. Science suggests that a number of factors are in play. For honeybees, the risks may include viruses, parasites, and lack of genetic diversity. Both honeybees and other pollinators suffer from loss of habitat, inadequate forage, and pesticide exposure.

Two more stakeholder meetings are anticipated before finalizing the plan. You can follow the progress of the plan at [https://tinyletter.com/WI\\_Pollinator\\_Plan](https://tinyletter.com/WI_Pollinator_Plan)

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